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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001793

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIAN FORCE GENERATION FOR DARFUR

REF: A. E-MAIL AMBROSE TO ROBERTS 10/12/2004

[1](#)B. SANDUSKY E-MAIL 10/15/2004

Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for Reasons 1.5 (B & D).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary. Nigeria has already deployed one reinforced company to Sudan's Darfur region as part of the AU-authorized protection force and has committed to providing additional troops once authorized by the AU. Initially, this was thought to be a full additional battalion. During the first week of October, Defense Headquarters identified the 72d Para Battalion as their likely choice for deployment. This unit has been implicated in the Benue State massacre in 2001. Post has expressed concern about selection of 72d Para at all levels of the GON. It may be reluctant to back away from deployment of 72d Para because of operational considerations. There may also be issues of face-saving involved. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (S) On October 10, 2004, PolMilOff and ODC Chief told a highly-placed officer in the office of the Chief of Defense Staff that selection of the 72d Para Battalion would be problematic for the USG. This officer became agitated at this, claiming that the actions in Benue State were an internal political matter handled by the military under lawful orders from President Obasanjo. He went further to say that what happened at Benue is what happens when civil authorities decide to send the military in to restore order where the police are unable, especially when soldiers have already been killed.

[1](#)3. (S) On October 12, 2004, DAO and PolMilOff met with General Ogomudia, the Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), where the USG position on 72d Para was reiterated. The CDS expressed concern about our designation of 72d Para as a problem because we were "only considering one side of the story." He said that he performed his own investigation into the activities in Benue State and that there was a judicial review. Both found no inappropriate actions that could be blamed on either the unit or its leadership.

[1](#)4. (S) An Army officer in the room during the meeting added that most, if not all, of the unit's leadership has changed, either through retirement or reassignment, since 2001. At the end of the discussion, the CDS said no final decision about which unit to deploy had been made, and the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) would propose to the CDS which unit could be spared from its primary responsibility (internal stability and security). If 72d Para was selected, the COAS would be asked for another unit. If no other unit is available, and the U.S. is unwilling to support 72d Para, the CDS said that we would have to find another country to go to for troops (Note: DAO interpreted the CDS comment as meaning that Nigeria would find another country to support the deployment, not as the U.S. having to find another country to contribute troops. End Note.)

[1](#)5. (S) On October 15, 2004, the highly-placed officer from the office of the CDS told PolMilOff that a different unit, from the Kaduna area, had been selected for deployment to Darfur. Later that day, DAO and the UK DATT met with COAS, IG Agwai, to get an update on Army planning for the Darfur deployment. Agwai feigned surprise that the U.S. would not be able to support 72d Para and wanted the two DATTs to believe that this meeting was the first time he had heard of the problem. He claimed that a month's worth of planning was potentially wasted because they did not know about U.S. objections to this unit's human rights record. (Note: The UK DATT said Obasanjo may be working directly with COAS and leaving CDS out of loop. If this is the case, then this could have been the first time COAS heard about the problem. More likely is that the Army had already put time into planning for 72d Para deployment and would lose face by backing away from this unit over U.S. objections. End Note.) COAS asked for a listing of Army battalions to which the U.S. might object so as not to waste more time selecting another untouchable unit. He indicated he had very few battalions to choose from given commitments to UNAMSIL, UNMIL, the Bakassi, and the Niger Delta. Even if a new battalion could be immediately selected, the deployment schedule had already slipped by a month due to time needed

for integrating non-organic elements, training, and equipping the force. He noted that while supporting Obasanjo's efforts as AU President and participation in AU PKOs were extremely high priorities, if no suitable replacement unit could be identified, some other African country would have provide the troops. When asked if anything could be done to rehabilitate or absolve a unit associated with human right abuses, DAO said a thorough, transparent, and credible investigation and judicial process that held those responsible for Benue accountable would be a good start.

16. (S) On October 19, PolMilOff, DAO, and IO/PHO Director met with the Chief of Training and Operations at Defense Headquarters, General I.A. Dikko, to discuss peacekeeping operations. He noted that every unit receives 8 weeks of intensive training once it is earmarked for a PKO mission. He also said that Nigeria is considering deploying two companies to Darfur which, when combined with the company already deployed, would form a (small) battalion. During the conversation, DAO asked if 72d Para was still being considered for the Darfur deployment and reiterated U.S. concerns about this unit.

17. (S) General Dikko argued that 72d Para was not the unit responsible for the massacre in Benue State, and that the soldiers from the 3d Armored Division, specifically those based in Yola, were involved. In any case, Dikko said, the unit was only following orders. Therefore, he continued, if anyone should be punished, it should be those giving the orders, not the unit as a whole. He also said that the unit had already been punished by three years of IMET suspension. DAO stated that the "chain-of-command" argument was not valid and that everyone in a unit has a personal responsibility to respect human rights.

18. (C) Later on October 19, PolMilOff, DAO, and IO/PHO Director met with Brigadier General Hassan, Director of Peacekeeping Operations for Army Headquarters. Hassan discussed the overall operational tempo of the Nigerian Army (septel) and stated the Army was stretching to meet all of its commitments. He also said that units receive six weeks of training once identified for a peacekeeping deployment, including two days by the ICRC on human rights issues and Law of Land Warfare. (Comment: This train up period, identified by Hassan, is two weeks shorter than the training requirement identified by Defense Headquarters. End Comment.) When asked about 72d Para, he said that a decision from MOD was expected soon, and that he would forward the U.S. concerns to his higher headquarters.

19. (S) On October 22, the Minister of Defense telephoned A/DCM to discuss U.S. reservations regarding deployment of 72d Para. He said that deployment of troops is an urgent priority and 72d Para is the most convenient unit to deploy. Given these considerations, he requested that the U.S. drop its objections and support the deployment of 72d Para. A/DCM said that the U.S. is unable to support this deployment, regardless of the urgency of the priority or the convenience of the unit. A/DCM emphasized that this is an important priority for the U.S. and that all parties need to work harder to find a solution.

CAMPBELL